

A Statement In Support of the Incorporation of TEK (Traditional Ecological Knowledge), LEK (Local Ecological Knowledge), Local Observations, and Traditional Scientific Methods into Current Polar Bear Management Strategies.

Presented to the Scientific Working Group of the U.S./Russia Bi-Lateral Commission on March 5, 2010 Sheraton Hotel Anchorage, Alaska

It is widely understood that current polar bear management plans lack sufficient data. The lack of sufficient data is often attributed to the extended costs of conducting research in the arctic. However, modern scientific management strategies are also constrained by the exclusion of local observations, local ecological knowledge, and traditional scientific methods.

Today's indigenous groups exist as a result of thousands of years of the successful identification and application of scientific principles within their natural environments. This direct correlation between contemporary indigenous groups and their local ecologies were formed through consistent and repeated usage of understandings gained through the observation and cultural transmissions of understandings of population dynamics, seasonal movements and distributions, individual and group tendencies and behaviors, health statuses and indices, reproductive behaviors, and the effects of natural and anthropogenic mortality on harvest populations.

The inclusion of local expert observation and traditional scientific methods into this working group and management body will ultimately provide modern scientific resource management efforts with more accurate population estimates, harvest data, and other insights critical to effective polar bear management plans.

With sufficient support from this body, as well as the Bi-lateral Commission, we look forward to a co-operative approach to prioritizing research through the continued involvement of indigenous experts in addressing the issues regarding polar bear management. Issues such as the effects of climate change, subsistence harvests, and the effects of industrial development on the shared polar bear populations will be better served through the involvement of not only indigenous experts, but the many individuals, groups, and agencies concerned with polar bear management.

Sincerely,

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